5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
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Unfortunately the fact that this work is practical benevolence of the finest sort and carried on in the finest spirit has not served to commend sanitary regulations to the Arab, who regards them as a nuisance, a hindrance to business and an infringement of his personal liberty.

Mesopotamia has also grappled with the whole problem of education most courageously. An educational system has been organized which includes normal schools for teachers and a large number of primary and secondary schools for both boys and girls. There are a smaller number of high schools, and a central university is planned. Fifteen years ago the dominant European influence in this community was French, and no one could claim to be educated who could not talk that language fluently. There was a marked change a little later, and before the Great War German was the commanding influence. Now, of course, the predominant western influence is English, and it seems likely to remain so, for commerce will probably talk the English language for many years, whatever political upheavals the country may be destined to experience. It is true that the educational system has not as yet taken very deep root and that much of the work done is very superficial, but it is none the less exceedingly creditable and encouraging. Moreover, this western system of education will probably be more or less permanent, for it will always be the gateway to remunerative positions.

In general, the people of Mesopotamia have been brought into contact with conditions of modern life and are anxious for further progress. New wants have been created, and a certain increase in the commerce of the country is the inevitable result. All manner of western dress goods and shoes are to be found in the bazaars, as

*539 IT is said that in the days of Haroun er Rashid there was a youth named Jamil, and he was the son of a cloth merchant in the bazaar of Baghdad the City of Peace, and only upon God is there belief.

Now, there came a year in which the father of Jamil died, and he was one of the richest merchants in the City of Peace. And Jamil inherited from his father his shop, and the cloths and silks in the shop, and a chest containing gold of such weight that it took twenty men to lift it.

[764] Jamil mourned for his father for many months, and he took his body and buried it in Holy Nejaf, and he returned to Baghdad and sat in the shop to conduct business in place of his father. And in the evenings he used to take a boat, and visit the islands and eat of roast fish and drink arak. But one evening he was passing in his boat when he looked at the window of a house which stood in a garden close to the river and he saw in the window a girl. And he looked at the girl and was amazed, for her skin was of the texture of the petals of lilies, though tinged with the colour of roses. And her eyes were like the gazelle. And her breasts were rounded firmly in that shape which is truly the zenith of perfection, and her waist was as slim as a boy's waist. And Jamil thought: I have no desire and no ambition in life other than that I may love this girl.

So Jamil returned to his house, and he did not go to the islands. And he found a discreet woman who was not accustomed to gossip at the well, and from whom death or torture would not drag a secret. And he said to the sage woman: Go to the street of So-and-So, then go to the house which stands in the garden of pomegranate trees, then speak with the woman servants, and find out from them everything concerning the moon-faced girl who lives in that house, and bring me all information

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*539 cursed them, saying: Know what you have done, fools, You have slain the Ottoman Bey, even the Bey of the Gendarmerie himself. Now take this body and remove it far from my house, that I may not become involved in this affair.

And the slaves Ali and Hamed removed the sheet and they saw that the Bey was even as in the grip of death, and Ali said: I am astonished that we were in search of a soul without a body and we have found a body without a soul. And they asked: But where can we take this body? For wherever we leave it in the town, the Turks will find it, and they will say: The Arabs have slain the Bey of the Gendarmerie. Nor will they cease from arrests and torture until they discover the truth of this matter. And Habiba said: Wrap the body in a blanket and tie it up after the manner of a corpse, and take it to the serai. For •[764 there is halted near there a caravan from Persia carrying 778] bodies for burial in the holy soil of sacred Nejf. There you may leave this body, for the camels will be unloaded for the night, and you may leave this body with the other bodies, and in the morning they will not notice that there is one body too many, and they will load it up and take it away and bury it in holy Nejf.

And Ali and Hamed put the body of the Turk in a blanket and bound it with ropes after the manner of corpses and took it to the caravan which was halted near the serai. And the camels were unloaded for the night and the corpses had been piled in a big pile, and there was no guard nor sentry over them. For who would steal this merchandise?

And the slaves put the body of the Bey in that pile, but they put him underneath and they piled on him corpses that the fresh corpse might not be on top. And the two

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slaves, Ali and Hamed, left him and went off to search for the soul of their comrade, Jaffer. 539*

Now, the Turkish Bey had not been killed by the blow of Ali the slave, but only stunned by it, and after a time his senses returned to him, and he found himself bound in a blanket and he could not move either hand or foot. And he breathed and smelled the smell of corpses, nor could he perceive any other odour.

And he thought: Verily, I am slain, and they have put me with the bodies and they are going to bury me. But my life has been a wicked life and shortly I shall be examined on my fitness to enter paradise. And the Bey wept and his heart was full of repentance, and he commenced to recite verses from the Holy Quran.

Now, the owner of the caravan was in his tent, a Persian from Shiraz, and he was calculating the profit which he would have from the bodies, for the relations and heirs of the dead had paid him a sum of money to transport the bodies from Shiraz to Nejf, and to buy a plot of land in which to bury them, and some had paid a lot of money for expensive land near to the holy shrine and others had paid a little money for land far removed from it, and they had also paid for the expenses of burial and had given donations for the holy shrine. And the Persian caravaneer had the record of these sums in his book. 539* 764 778

And he thought: If I continue this journey to Nejf and disburse all these various sums, then the profit which will remain for me will be small, and it will not recompense me for all this trouble and the everlasting smell of these corpses. Rather should I do another thing, I should dump these bodies in the high desert where none may see them, and the jackals and the vultures will have a profit from 539*

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103 Arabic) is sometimes known as Bet al Maqadas, or the Holy House.

Cousin. Page 44, Line 13. 'Has she a cousin?'

582 The right of a man to ask for his cousin in marriage is still main-
178 tained in the tribes. Should the girl or her parents not desire the marriage it may be necessary in some cases to compensate the man for the loss of his right. Family opinion is also a powerful factor tending to
[69] force a man to marry his cousin. In spite of all this, however, the bulk of marriages are between different families, and a surprisingly large number of marriages would appear to be between different tribes. The railway is increasing this tendency, as a man gets employment away from home and frequently marries a girl in the area in which he is working. I remember meeting tribesmen driving lorries in Persia who expressed the desire to take back a Persian wife, but who were anxious about the reception she might meet at their homes. I am told that some did in fact do so, concealing the girls on their lorries when crossing the frontier at Khaniqin.

6. THE STORY OF THE LOST SOUL

Page 60, Line 17. 'A caravan from Persia carrying bodies for burial.'

764 The majority of Persians are of the Shia section of Islam, so wealthy
788 families send their dead to Iraq for burial. The usual custom is for families to come on pilgrimage to the cities of Kerbala, Nejf, and Kadhimain, and to bring the body for burial at the same time. This is many months after the time of death, for Iraqi health regulations now ban the import of recently dead corpses. The body is therefore buried in Persia near to the place of death and dug up when in condition to travel. It is no uncommon thing in a Persian graveyard to see a wooden stretcher lying on top of a tomb to indicate that the family intend to send the body for bur...l in holier soil, though it appears that poverty or forgetfulness after the passage of months often interfere with the actual journey. However, the sight of Persian pilgrims putting a coffin on to the train at Maqil Railway Station is not an uncommon one. Should the family themselves not be able to travel they might have to rely on agents, but it would be the duty of the dead man's eldest son to go with the body if unavoidable circumstances, such as military service or the lack of a passport, did not make it impossible.